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Review of the structure and functions of all liaison offices or representation in New York of organizations headquartered elsewhere funded from the regular budget

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

By its resolution 58/270 of 23 December 2003, the General Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to review the structure and functions of all liaison or representation offices in New York of organizations headquartered elsewhere funded from the regular budget and to report to the Assembly.

The information provided in the present report includes a description of the functions and the level of staff resources of these representative offices in New York.

* The present document is issued at this time owing to the requirement for extensive consultations with the offices concerned.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 47 of its resolution 58/270 of 23 December 2003, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to review the structure and functions of all liaison or representation offices in New York of organizations headquartered elsewhere funded from the regular budget and to report to the Assembly.

II. Structure and functions

2. The aforementioned request was brought to the attention of all the representative offices in New York of organizations headquartered elsewhere funded from the regular budget, namely the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the New York office of the regional commissions. Consultations were also held with the representatives of these offices in terms of possibilities for improving their effectiveness.

3. The functions and the level of staff resources of these representation offices in New York are summarized below.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Posts: regular budget — 1 P-5, 1 P-3 and 2 GS

4. The New York office of UNCTAD is responsible for: provision of policy advice from UNCTAD to intergovernmental bodies in New York, particularly the Second Committee of the General Assembly and the Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as to members of delegations in New York on all matters relating to intersection of trade, investment, finance, technology and development; identification of policy declarations, research reports and technical cooperation inputs from delegations, intergovernmental bodies, United Nations agencies and programmes and North American-based sources that would enhance programme implementation at UNCTAD; coordination with United Nations system organizations in New York and Washington, D.C., including through the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Group and the Millennium Project Task Forces, on a range of inter-agency matters, including policy coherence, institutional arrangements and programme implementation on all matters of importance to UNCTAD; facilitation of technical cooperation and capacity development on trade, investment and technology-related matters with permanent missions in New York and technical assistance agencies, particularly the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank; and provision of a North American access point for information to the public, universities, media and research centres on the research policy and technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD.

United Nations Environment Programme

Posts: regular budget — 1 P-4, 1 P-2 and 2 GS

5. The New York office of UNEP is responsible for both representational and substantive programmatic activities, and is the location of the Policy Coordination and Inter-agency Affairs branch of the Division of Policy Development and Law. The office serves as a vital link for UNEP in the three main areas of inter-governmental meetings, inter-agency matters and outreach activities.

6. Through its comprehensive workload, the office has a dual reporting line, to both the office of the UNEP Executive Director and the Division of Policy Development and Law. As the representative office of the UNEP Executive Director, it acts on his behalf in many activities related to the work undertaken by the Office of the Executive Director (e.g. in United Nations reform matters and Senior Management Group follow-up, initiatives launched by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and linkages with the United Nations Secretariat).

7. The New York office ensures, through its participation in inter-governmental meetings, that the UNEP mandate and activities on a wide variety of environmental policy issues are taken into account in the deliberations and recommendations of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies located at United Nations Headquarters, as well as special United Nations summits and conferences. In this regard, the New York office is the UNEP focal point for the Council and the Commission on Sustainable Development. The office also provides guidance and support to the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum through the preparation of key policy documents and by providing substantive support to intergovernmental processes, such as that on international environmental governance and the development of strategic action plans on capacity-building. The location of the office in New York enables close cooperation in these areas with, inter alia, the United Nations Secretariat and UNDP.

8. The UNEP role in the coordination of United Nations system-wide activities in the field of the environment is ensured by the participation of the New York office in major inter-agency meetings, such as the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and Executive Committees, as well as linkages with agencies, funds and programmes and departments of the United Nations system. The office develops strategies and specific policy initiatives and proposals in this regard. It also undertakes substantive collaborative initiatives with partners in the United Nations system, such as the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization in the field of health and environmental linkages, especially its effects on children. The New York office is also the UNEP focal point for its membership in the United Nations Development Group and coordination of programmatic activities related to country-level capacity development and technical cooperation.

9. With the role and influence of civil society greatly expanding within the international community, the New York office has a key role in developing and maintaining active contacts with United Nations-affiliated non-governmental organizations (NGOs), foundations, private sector corporations, academic institutions, religious and indigenous groups and others. Through various outreach initiatives and products, the office builds support among such groups for the work of UNEP, providing them with scientific and substantive information and facilitating

the transmittal of their views and information to other substantive units within UNEP. The office maintains a network of media contacts within the region and at the United Nations in an effort to ensure that environmental issues and problems and the role of the United Nations in their solution are featured appropriately and targeted to the applicable audiences. The New York office also serves as the UNEP focal point with the Department of Public Information, works closely with the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General and organizes environment-related special events and exhibits at United Nations Headquarters and in New York.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Posts: regular budget — 1 D-1, 1 P-4 and 2 GS

10. The main functions of the New York office of UN-HABITAT include coordination, harmonization and representation. The office represents UN-HABITAT in meetings of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, relevant functional commissions, the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and other policy-making bodies. The office supports the substantive work of UN-HABITAT and contributes to the strengthening of cooperation and coordination with the United Nations Secretariat, funds and programmes, and other agencies of the common system. In this regard, the office ensures representation at inter-agency meetings and participates in the meetings of the United Nations Development Group, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and their support groups. In addition, the office maintains relations with the UN-HABITAT partners in the North America region and carries out information activities at United Nations Headquarters and in the North America region.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Posts: regular budget — 1 P-5 and 2 GS

11. The New York liaison office of UNRWA is directly involved with the presentation of the Commissioner-General's annual report to the General Assembly, as well as other regular reports and biennial budget submissions. The Chief of the office represents the Agency, as required, in the deliberations of the Fifth Committee and in other intergovernmental forums, such as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The Chief also acts as the key motivator to the General Assembly's Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA.

12. The office represents the Commissioner-General in regular meetings of inter-agency bodies of which UNRWA is a member, including the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs and various subcommittees of CEB, as well as various task forces and working groups. The office plays a major role in the formulation of input for the UNRWA section of the United Nations regular budget and is regularly engaged in follow-up with the United Nations Secretariat on budgetary matters. UNRWA contacts and substantive interaction through the liaison office in New York with the various departments and offices in the United Nations Secretariat are ongoing throughout the year.

13. In addition, the New York liaison office of UNRWA plays an important role in maintaining an extensive network of contacts with the permanent missions in New York, with other United Nations bodies whose head offices are away from Headquarters, with NGOs and with other elements of the civil society, serves as the UNRWA public information office in North America and is actively engaged in outreach and fund-raising activities in the United States and Canada. Such activities and contacts are crucial in maintaining positive visibility for a humanitarian programme which depends significantly on voluntary funding and international good will and support.

14. The office provides substantive input and advice to the UNRWA senior management on developments and issues of concern to the Agency, both at the United Nations, particularly in intergovernmental bodies and the Secretariat, and in the United States in general. The liaison office also provides back-up to the Office of the Commissioner-General in its contacts with the Government of Canada.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Posts: regular budget — 1 D-2, 1 P-5, 2 P-4, 1 P-3 and 4 GS

15. The New York office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is a substantive outpost of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner, tasked with a range of substantive, policy and representational functions linked to New York and North America-based entities and processes and, more broadly, to the process of United Nations reform launched by the Secretary-General in 1997. The New York office works through United Nations Headquarters and United States-based mechanisms and processes to advance human rights issues and to emphasize the importance of human rights on the international and national agendas, to promote international cooperation for human rights, to stimulate and coordinate human rights action across the United Nations system, to ensure effective linkages between Geneva and field-based human rights entities and New York-based bodies and offices, to promote universal ratification and implementation of international treaties and to assist in discussions on the development of new norms, to support the work of human rights organs and treaty-monitoring bodies in New York, to contribute to anticipating serious violations and reacting to violations, to emphasize preventive human rights action and to promote cooperation in the establishment of national human rights infrastructures and to provide education, information and advice in the field of human rights.

16. In particular, the New York office:

(a) Represents the High Commissioner at United Nations Headquarters, at meetings of policy-making organs, with permanent missions of Member States, at executive committees and their subsidiary bodies, at interdepartmental and inter-agency meetings and at meetings with NGOs and the media;

(b) Provides policy advice and recommendations on substantive matters to the High Commissioner, to other officials and to special rapporteurs and representatives on mission in New York;

(c) Serves as a headquarters-based source of substantive expertise on the human rights aspects of development, humanitarian affairs, peace and security, and economic and social affairs;

(d) Works through United Nations reform mechanisms and interagency bodies towards the full integration of human rights in United Nations development, peace and security, humanitarian and economic and social activities and policies;

(e) Helps to ensure due attention to human rights concerns in the Organization's crisis response activities;

(f) Advises senior officials on the policies of the United Nations in the area of human rights and assists in coordinating human rights activities throughout the United Nations system;

(g) Consults with the pertinent United Nations funds and programmes on the strengthening of inter-agency coordination in respect of human rights;

(h) Supplies information, advice and substantive support on human rights issues to the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies;

(i) Provides human rights materials, information, briefings and training to permanent missions, United Nations departments and offices, agencies and programmes, NGOs, academic institutions, interns and the media;

(j) Provides support to special rapporteurs and representatives and to meetings of the human rights bodies and organs in New York;

(k) Maintains liaison with and provides information and advice on human rights to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General;

(l) Maintains liaison with the headquarters of key international institutions and major non-governmental human rights organizations in New York;

(m) Represents the High Commissioner before and engages on human rights issues with the United States-based international financial institutions, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Posts: regular budget — 1 P-5 and 1 GS

17. A common liaison office in New York is shared by the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The office interacts substantively with other United Nations partners at Headquarters, including the United Nations Development Group, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and intergovernmental bodies. It promotes the objectives of the Office on Drugs and Crime among delegations at Headquarters and maintains close liaison with the international financial institutions in Washington, D.C., to ensure their continuing support for anti-money-laundering activities and for business plans for international drug control. The office also interacts with non-United Nations entities in North America, including United States government departments, academic institutions, think tanks and other civil society organizations.

New York office of the regional commissions

Posts: regular budget — 1 D-1, 1 P-5, 1 P-4 and 3 GS

18. The office represents the five regional commissions at intergovernmental meetings held in New York, primarily of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. It prepares the annual report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields, which is submitted to the Council at its substantive session. In connection with intergovernmental support, the office provides formal and informal explanations to delegations on the work of the regional commissions as it relates to items under consideration. It provides the commissions with analysis and synthesis of developments during the course of the sessions of the Assembly and the Council as well as meetings of their subsidiary bodies.

19. The office participates on behalf of the regional commissions in the High-level Committee on Programmes, provides support to the participation of the current Coordinator of the regional commissions in CEB and reports on the outcome of both bodies to the commissions. It provides substantive support to the participation of the Executive Secretaries in the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs. It also participates in other inter-agency meetings at the request of the commissions.

20. The office acts as the secretariat of the meetings of the Executive Secretaries and promotes and facilitates coordination and cooperation among the regional commissions in the planning and implementation of joint programmes and activities on issues of common concern in the substantive areas. The office follows up on matters relating to the regional commissions with the various Secretariat departments and offices at Headquarters. It also participates in the meetings of the Steering Committee on Reform and Management and coordinates the submissions of the regional commissions on related matters.

21. The office maintains contact on behalf of the Executive Secretaries and regional commissions with permanent missions and observers of the United Nations, relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the public in New York. It issues a biannual newsletter on the views and activities of the regional commissions on major issues under consideration at the global level. It also provides information on request from the public, universities, media and research centres on normative and operational activities of the regional commissions.

III. Conclusion and recommendation

22. It is evident from the review that these representative offices in New York provide substantive contributions to the work programme of their parent offices, while maintaining a much smaller portion of traditional liaison functions. Activities focus on matters requiring representatives' participation in meetings both at the intergovernmental level and within the Secretariat. These offices are operating with the benefit of current technology and are striving to be as effective as possible within the limited budgetary resources available to them.

23. **The General Assembly may wish to take note of the present report.**